

**Admiral John Richardson, CNO**  
**Remarks - University of Notre Dame Leadership Week**  
**February 2017**

**Admiral Richardson:** All right, thank you.

Everybody, you know, usually I say continue eating, but this time I'm going to say not. All right? Just everybody stop eating right now. [Laughter]. No, seriously, you can continue to munch on your desert while we talk. I'm just going to take a little bit of time to get to know everybody a little bit more. I enjoyed taking pictures with everybody out there during the cocktail hour, and we'll just get to know each other here.

My goal is to have sort of a light-hearted part of this speech and a very heavy academic part of this speech which is perfect for the evening speech at dinner, then there will be the quiz, then we can open it up to questions. Only for people who pass the quiz, though. If you don't pass the quiz you can't ask a question. Okay?

So any questions about the rules of engagement? [Laughter]. All right, good.

Listen, before I get rolling, I think just a tremendous amount of thanks and recognition are in order. This is a really world-class event, and everybody that I've had a chance to talk to agrees with me that there's so much packed into this weekend. And in fact I was talking to Lieutenant Mulharick, saying that this weekend literally turned her career motivation around. I mean it was, the discussions of leadership, the energy in this weekend convinced her that the Navy was the type of place that she wanted to stay, wanted to use her talents to be part of something bigger than all of us, and it happened this weekend.

So to put that together, to do the logistics, to send out the invitations. You know, we were talking at our table, it's like a giant wedding, right? You've got to have the budget in place and you've got to get the clothes right and you've got to get the invitations out and the whole thing. So let's just warm up here, it's been polite, all clapping up until now, but I'd really like to let it go for, first of all, our host, Captain John Carter here at Notre Dame. So let's give it up for Captain Carter here. [Applause]. That's not a bad warmup.

Then, the people who really made it happen. Lieutenant Jennifer Mulharick who was the coordinator of the event here. I will tell you, just managing the CNO road show is usually a full-time job. Jennifer did all of that in the context of taking care of the rest of the event, and she could not have done it without the capable assistance of Midshipman Second Class Mazden Carlin and Midshipman Second Class Gregory Bombara. So let's really send it up for them too. All right? [Applause].

All right. And there is just one more person that I need to recognize before we get rolling here. Well, a couple more. Actually, there's about 10 or 12 more. But the next one is Lieutenant Dave Miller. Lieutenant Miller, can I ask you to stand up please? Lieutenant Miller is a submarine. The Houston, right? If I remember. Maine. Okay, that's right. I've met a couple of submariners tonight. So he came from the USS Maine, and it was his goal this past week to let his birthday go by undetected. So what was it, yesterday? Okay. And he's kind of the young pup in the office here of instructors, a brand-new 28-year-old lieutenant. I would say that he probably did not achieve stealth with respect to the birthday thing. [Laughter]. But I think we all need to sing Happy Birthday. You guys with me? [Happy Birthday].

Okay. With me tonight also from just sort of the Navy senior leadership are three people who I have just the absolute utmost respect, and also happen to be just terrific friends. Captain Carter mentioned them earlier, but I just want to come back and say a little bit more.

First of all, all the way from Naples, Italy, the Commander of the United States 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet is Admiral Grady and his wife. Well, I'll tell you what. Things are busy in the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet right now, so for him to come all the way out here. You know, the George H.W. Bush Strike Group is there, doing strikes in Iraq and Syria right now. That is under Admiral Grady's command. Just as soon as he relieved, I think with days, Chris, it was, the Wasp was doing strikes into Libya against ISIS. And this was not something that they had prepared for. This is the nature of our business, that you've got to take these missions as they come. Adapt and achieve the aim. And so we are just so lucky, all of us, to have you here. So thank you very much. [Applause].

And then swinging back over here, the sea lord, the master of the surface warfare community, a longtime friend, classmate, Admiral Tom Rowden. Give it up. [Applause].

First of all, just an absolutely stunning performance. Can I have everybody who is going to be a surface warfare officer please stand up? This is an audience participation event, if you haven't figured that out. You guys were on the cutting edge.

First of all, throughout the Navy about this time everybody is service selecting, and it is a super-exciting time, and nowhere in our Navy is it more exciting than in the surface warfare community. And I will tell you that the NROTC community's use of Google Hangouts and all of those really up-to-speed techniques, to dive in and just capture that spirit around the country to choose and get your service selection and your ship selection is just really inspiring. So to all the surface warfare officers, let's give them a round of a hand. [Applause].

**Voice:** SWotivated, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** All right. And all that SWotivation, all of it, comes from the super nova of SWotivation which is Admiral Rowden and his wife Suzy out at San Diego. Thanks so much for leading that community and really getting them fired up. So thanks very much. [Applause].

And then, Admiral Evans who is the, well he's the genius that stitches it all together, in charge of all of our Naval Education and Training. And that starts with boot camp and all of your indoctrinations and go through every possible school that we have. There is probably no more dynamic area in our business right now than our schools, and if you, well, you're in the academic environment, and so you know that so much has been learned about education and how to teach one another, right? So Admiral Evans is at the very cutting edge of all of that. He inculcates and builds toughness into our Navy right from the very start, taking all of you from around the world, and all of our Sailors -- 40,000 per year -- and gets them through boot camp, brings them, sailorization, we call it, and brings them all onto a common understanding of what our Navy is about, what our values are, and makes them tough, ready to go on out there and do their job.

In addition, look around this room. This is a group that represents America. Right? You look around, we look like America. That's because Admiral Evans is out there around America with his team, grabbing people from everywhere and bring

them into the team. So let's give it up for Admiral Evans and the whole -- [Applause].

And as good as he is at this, he's going to be even better as the Strike Group Commander which is his very next job. So that's about as cool a job as we have in our Navy. [Applause].

Okay. So let's get down to brass tacks here. The theme of the conference, right? Ready to Lead, Ready to Follow, Never Quit. Okay? That's the official theme of the conference. And as I've worked my [wildly] ways through the evening I've found that there is an unofficial theme of the conference. Midshipman Smart? Don't be Weird. All right? Is that it? That's not a bad goal, either.

I'll tell you, let's go back to the official one, okay? The Ready to Lead, I want to talk you through what we've just signed out is our Navy Leader Development Framework. And this is the first chance I get to talk about it. So it's exciting for me to do that.

Ready to Follow. I think this is the very first step in becoming a leader, is learning how to follow. And really, as you learn how to follow you learn how to lead yourself, which is the most important thing you're going to learn. And it's not one lesson. It's not once and done. You're going to have to learn how to lead yourself throughout your career.

Then Never Quit. If you read the Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority, we talk about four attributes. One of those attributes is toughness. And if you think about, well as [inaudible] said in writing that attribute, we don't give up the ship and we never quit.

So what three great themes to define this conference today.

I thought within the context of those themes we'd just sort of walk through, it's a little bit academic, and I know you're not. [Laughter]. There was some discussion about notebooks. If you have a notebook with you, this is the time to break it out. Okay?

All right, I'll tell you what. For many -- I'm only kidding. Do not break out your notebooks. [Laughter]. Serious crowd we've got here. [Laughter].

I'll tell you what. Your life is about to go through a profound change. Okay? For all the 1<sup>st</sup> Class Midshipmen, please raise your hands. So you are right on the cusp of the change, but everybody in this room, all of you midshipmen, you're only within a few years of this change. And I would say that they change really, up to now, for good reason, it's really been about you. The nation and the Navy has poured a tremendous amount of resources to prepare you for the challenge you're going to face in a very short period of time. And I have great confidence that we've done that. But the moment you report aboard your first command, it is all about your team. All about your team. Okay?

If you make that transition and you internalize that, you can never go wrong in our Navy or Marine Corps, right? Anything you do to strengthen you Sailors, strengthen your Marines, make them better warfighters, look after their needs before your own, you do that, you're going to be right in the center channel and doing fine. But it is a big mind shift. It's big. Okay?

So we put this Leader Framework together to kind of give you some structure as to how we think about making that shift. We start, the structure of the framework goes like this. We have in mind a goal, an objective. And we kind of bring it down to one objective. And then like every objective, if you have an address and you put it into your Google Maps, that's going to provide a path to get to that objective, so the framework talks about a path. And then you're going to have to figure out some way to move down that path and so the framework talks about that. So we'll just kind of quickly go through that, and then I want to turn it over to questions for you.

The one goal, the objective to which we're striving for is that we've got to, we have got to develop leaders who can build teams that can win. All right? If you've been watching the news lately, you know that we are in hot competition out there at sea right now. It is not like it has been for the past 25 years, to be honest. For some time sea control for the United States Navy was not a problem. Now we are being challenged. In very important parts of the world we are being contested and we have got to, just like an athlete, we have got to get into fighting trim, lean out, and become competitive. And you as junior leaders, are going to make this happen.

I'm going to do a little bit of reading. I've got two somewhat long quotes.

Here's the other thing I've learned, it takes about 90 seconds for a U.S. Navy Midshipman to fall asleep. [Laughter]. So hang with me, this is right at about the 75 second point. Okay?

So our goal, top leaders inspire their teams to perform at or near their theoretical limits. By making their team stronger, they relentlessly chase best-ever performance. They study every text, try every method, seize every moment, and they spend every effort to out-fox their competition. They ceaselessly communicate, train, test, and challenge their team. They are toughest on themselves. They routinely seek out feedback and are ready to be shown their errors in the interest of learning and betting better. When they win, they are grateful. Humble, and frankly spent from their effort. And by doing all these things great leaders bring their teams into a deeply shared commitment to each other in the pursuit of victory.

Okay. That is our goal.

A couple of things. Sustainable team. Your team is not one battle and done. They've got to fight and win again and again and again. So you need to be a leader who watches out, to make your team stronger. And it is about winning. Do not mistake that for a second. We are not out there to be the second most powerful Navy in the world. We are the first most powerful Navy in the world. You're going to lead that Navy forward.

Okay? So everybody good on the goal? All right.

The path to that goal is like a road, okay? And this road has two lanes. One lane, and you've been on this, is competence. As you develop as a leader, as you progress towards that goal, you're going to want to get better and better at what you do. You're going to want to become more and more skilled as a warfighter, as a Sailor. As a Marine. As a leader of Sailors and a leader of Marines. Okay? So there's this competence piece.

We cannot have leaders who don't know what they're doing. Leaders who don't know what they're doing get their people killed. All right? All while looking sincere. So know what you're doing. There is that lane devoted to competence.

But there is another lane that's just as important, and it's going to become more important as things get more sporty. This is the lane that develops your character.

We have our Navy core values -- Honor, Courage and Commitment. We have our attributes, four attributes -- Integrity, Accountability, Initiative and Toughness. Those are milestones, lane markers to help you develop your character.

Now you're going to go out and you're going to be junior leaders, junior officers on your teams. And with respect to competence, the system is designed for you to go out and make mistakes, to try your hardest. If you make a mistake, the system is built to recover that, right? You'll have a safety net there. You'll have an over-instruction watch. Someone will be coaching you the whole way. If you give the wrong order, they'll stop you and correct you. It's built in. Don't hesitate to give the order. That's how you learn. That's how you grow. Okay? The system's built to accommodate those types of developmental mistakes in competence.

Where the system is much less forgiving, where your troops will be much less forgiving, is if you demonstrate flaws in character, because then they won't trust you, and they won't trust their lives to you and you will be lost to them as a leader. So guard your integrity and your character very closely. It will be tough. You will be pulled in a lot of directions. You've got qualifications to complete. You've got fit reps to fill out. You've got to do this particular evolution with your men. You know, whatever it is you will be pulled in a lot of different directions. Keep your character intact.

In fact, as you develop as a leader, it's going to go beyond yourself and you're going to be asked to keep and strengthen both the competence and the character of your team.

These are the two fundamental ingredients of delegation, right? This is what allows our Navy to operate. Senior leaders can delegate to junior leaders because they're confident that they have the skills needed to do the job they've been given, and we share the same value structure. And I know that when I send that commander over the horizon with their team they're going to come back stronger than when they left because they're going to develop on the fly. They're going to develop while operating. They're going to get stronger while in combat. All right? But only if you mind and develop your competence and also your character.

So those are the links that lead to that one goal of teams achieving theoretical limits in the pursuit of victory.

Now how do you get down that road? Well, you're in luck. The Navy's got all sorts of ways to help you get down that road.

First, we have our system of formal schools. You're deeply embedded in that right now. Okay? All of you ROTC midshipmen are in a school program that is heavily influenced by your Naval ROTC program, and so you're getting it. You're on the road already in that regard. You're using our schools. And as you develop as officers, you'll be back to school and back to school. You'll continue to build both your competence and your character in those formal schools. Okay? So that's one method of moving down the road.

The second method is on the job. You'll learn a tremendous amount on your first job. You'll get a sea daddy or a mentor that will teach you so much. Your first chief petty officer, your first sergeant, they will teach you. When I became an ensign my chief was very clear. He came up to me and said, Mr. Richardson, welcome. You're in charge of the division and I will let you know when you have permission to speak to them. Okay? [Laughter]. He took my training very seriously. Okay? And so there is a tremendous amount of on-the-job training that will happen. That's the second method.

The third method is on you. It is self-guided learning. Those leaders who are obsessed and after every inch are going to teach themselves. They're not going to wait for a formal school. They're not going to wait for on-the-job training. They're going to do all that, yes, and they're going to do more. They're going to teach themselves. They're going to find that book. They're going to go to that class. They're going to pull down that blog. Whatever it takes, they're going to continue to develop themselves because we are leaders who are achieving theoretical limits, right? This is what it takes.

So those are the three methods. Formal schools, on the job, and the very powerful self-learning. Look at all the Navy and military leaders, in fact any leader, right, that you admire, and I will bet a paycheck they were voracious readers and self-learners. Eisenhower, Marshal, Nimitz, they all read like crazy. They studied everything. Nobody had to drag them into class to do that. They did that because they wanted to win. They did that because their sailors' lives were in the balance. Be that type of leader. All right?



Okay, another show of hands. That's the end of the academic part.

Any jazz musicians in the crew? Okay. Good for you. Any like improv artists, improve comedy. You know? Raise your hands up. Okay, good. How about debaters. Debate team folks? What's the formal word for that? Debaters?

**Voice:** Winner. [Laughter].

**Admiral Richardson:** There's something about the sport of debating. I forget it right now.

Soccer players? Okay. Any rowers? Crew? There you go.

When you get there as a leader, it's almost like that jazz band who really kind of hits it, right? And all of them are unconsciously in the groove and they're picking up on each other's riffs. That's the whole thing about jazz, right? You're going to, somebody's going to take the lead, they're going to take a few bars, and then they're going to hand it off and you're going to just intuitively know that it's your turn and you're going to take it up a notch, right? And you just build off of each other.

It's the same for improv, right? The successful ingredient for improvisation is you've got to always take the hand-off and you've got to make it better. You can't stop.

The same for soccer. When you are really in the zone, it's almost like you're in each other's minds.

I was a rower. And this great book called Boys in the Boat. Has anybody read that book? If you haven't read that book, I highly recommend it. It is fantastic. And there is a thing that happens in a crew shell, and it happens very rarely, but it is when the team has come together to the degree that there is no recognition of any individual in that team. They achieve a level of performance, and it's called swing. When the boat starts to swing. Okay? Daniel Brown, the author of Boys in the Boat, captured this so well that I just want to maybe end my talk on this quote. "There is something that happens in rowing that is hard to achieve and hard to define. It's called swing. It only happens when all eight oarsmen are rowing in such perfect unison that no single action by anyone is out of synch with those of all the others. Only then will the boat continue to run unchecked, fluidly and gracefully, between the pulls of

the oars. Rowing then becomes a kind of perfect language, poetry. That's what good swing feels like."

Young leaders, go out there, take charge, learn with every molecule of your energy. Put your Sailors and Marines before yourselves and build teams that can achieve swing.

Thank you very much.

[Applause].

I think we've got some time for questions.

**Question:** Navy Service Shipman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Gary, University of Notre Dame.

So throughout the whole room, we're all a very diverse set of majors and intended career paths. Can you comment on your vision, to your system, across the measures and how they support the success of the Navy?

**Admiral Richardson:** I'll tell you what. I think you hit, in your very first sentence, I think you used the word diverse. And that's how I see it. While there may be a tiered system, I think it's extremely important that we really achieve diversity. Admiral Evans and I were talking about this at great length earlier today.

There's a great book out there by a Nobel Prize-winning, he's actually a psychologist, but he got his Nobel Prize in Economics. The guy's name is Dan Kahneman, and he wrote a book called Thinking Fast and Slow. It's on my reading list. And he talks about the power of bias in each one of us. And it's amazingly powerful. These built-in biases that we all have. And what these biases do is they sort of design in blind spots in our thinking and in our consideration. Because they're kind of baked into us, they're a function of how we were raised. They're a part of us. It's almost impossible for us to shine light into our own blind spots. But by virtue of bringing, including diverse points of view from diverse cultures, diverse places, diverse education, diverse majors, diverse thinking, it shines lights into all of our blind spots and helps us overcome our inherent bias.

These biases, they're vulnerabilities. They can be used by the enemy against us. So we are stronger when we have these spotlights shining into our blind spots and that comes from

diverse teams. And so I think rather than, you know, try and advocate for any tier over the next, what I would advocate the most strongly for is that we've got to maintain the diversity of all of those majors, right? And as you develop as leaders, you're starting up, many of you that I've talked to are starting off in highly technical majors, and that's very appropriate. You're going to go do highly technical things. But you know what? There's another part of it. So this is a great area for self-guided learning, that third method for moving down the path. You don't have to go back to school necessarily, to read the humanities, to read the great books. There's lists of these things. And you can go on-line and read the book and then read a book about the book, right? It just really depends on how much you want to learn.

So make sure that you're balancing yourself out as you move through your career. If you start off heavy, technical, hey, as you get out to your first sea tour, bring Marcus Aurelius meditations along with you. Bring Epictetus Enchiridion along with you. Learn the Stoic philosophers. Read Thucydides. Read the classics, okay? Learn about that. Take your Bible. Right? Start with the book of Sirach. It's a nice book of wisdom, and it's a good place to start to round you out.

It's about diversity. You nailed it right in your very first sentence. So that's, I think, how I conceive of how our different majors and education schemes make our Navy stronger.

**Question:** Good evening, Admiral. Shipman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Yeager from Auburn University.

Because of the system, I had the incredible opportunity to go on some cruises and talk to Sailors and everything, and I asked them, you know, how does the U.S. Navy compare to other navies? We're the best, no one else can compete, we can win wars. And I believe them and I'm definitely happy about that. But I'm a little worried because, you know, you can get stuck in complacency. So I'm curious, what are our shortcomings, and what are we working on, and what's the vision for the future?

**Admiral Richardson:** Okay, I would say that where I am concerned, and I'll share this very openly with you, is about momentum. It's about relative motion. And so you've all done navigation classes, so you could probably do a maneuvering board in this if I asked you to, but I'll just give you the sports analogy because it's one that we can always understand.

For 20 years we've sort of been the only runner on the track. Okay? You can kind of run, and you're running, and you're running. [Laughter]. If there's a line to cross or a tape to break, okay, you crossed it first and you break that tape. Then, what we're seeing now is a time where okay, we're running, we're kind of in that same pace. We've gone maybe a little bit non-competitive. I don't know if complacent would be the word I'd use for our whole Navy. And we're starting to hear, you know, footsteps. We look back, and sure enough, there's somebody else on the track with us. So it's like huh. So we keep running and then we look back, and lo and behold, that runner's a little closer. So huh. Then we look back and he's closer still, so we pick up the pace. And we look back a little later, and guess what? They're still closing. All right? So we pick up the pace a little more. And now our lungs are starting to burn a little bit, and we're getting a little lactic acid in our thighs and we're looking back and they're still getting closer. So we've got to pick up the pace.

We've got to become more competitive. We've got to devise, maybe we jump on a bicycle. Right? [Laughter]. We've got to out-think, out-fox, out-perform these new runners that are on the track with us. Okay? You're going to be a gigantic injection of energy in that regard. You're going to really help us. Don't think for a moment you don't play a big role in that. This is on you.

**Question:** Good evening, sir, Midshipman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class [inaudible] of Ohio.

Last month I heard Admiral Moran speak and he said something that piques my interest. He --

**Admiral Richardson:** He's got that habit. He says something that piques interest.

**Question:** Yes, sir. He said every time there's an election, there's kind of caution, we have a new government. But it's also a time to capitalize and take advantage of opportunities.

So moving forward with the new government, where do you see the Navy being more cautious, and where do you see the Navy capitalizing?

**Admiral Richardson:** I'm not really about caution. I see tremendous opportunity. You just have to read what the President and the Secretary of Defense have said about making

the military stronger. So what a great scenario to be in. Okay? So we're working extremely hard to help the President do that. So we're looking across the entire spectrum of operations and everything we do as a Navy.

We've got folks like Admiral Rowden devising concepts like distributed lethality which allows our surface force to get back to competition, right? Back to sea control. Isn't it, Tom? And we're going to use distributed forces and concentrated fires to achieve that. So he's thinking it all up and putting a lot of meat on that bone. Hands it right over to Admiral Grady who says, I get it. I'm going to use it in the Mediterranean Sea or the Baltic or wherever. Right? To make sure we send the right signal to our competitors.

Then you come back, I'm kind of involved more with the corporate part of our Navy. So we are building more Navy. We've got plans to grow the Navy as we've been asked to do, to develop those plans. But it's more than just building more of what we've got right now.

So it's been a really cool week for me. I started my trip kind of in I guess Point Magoo, California where our warfare centers there are doing amazing things in electromagnetic warfare. You don't even see it, right? Very non-kinetic but amazingly effective.

You go from there down to San Diego where I had a chance to look at some folks who are building a high-energy laser that might take the place of your close-in weapon system. Okay? This is a laser now that can do a heck of a lot of stuff that I can't talk about in this room. But the price per round is like a dollar, to knock out anything you want out of the sky. Not thousands or millions of dollars, okay? So that was pretty cool. I even had a chance, the Major who's there, he's got my souvenir where I blasted this laser through about two inches of steel. It took about 1.5 seconds to get through that. Okay? So this is something that's ready for a ship.

Then I went from there into the folks that are building our unmanned carrier-based aircraft, the MQ25. They're talking about all of the analysis and the aerodynamics and the flight controls and everything else that are going into this unmanned aircraft. And we're going to fly before you know it.

So it's not just about building more of the Navy, it's about building that different Navy. So I think that's the opportunity

I see. And just very consistent with the one goal. We're going to go for every inch of that and we're not going be behind.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman Hernandez, [inaudible].

**Admiral Richardson:** Go Aggies.

**Question:** I wanted to get your opinion on allowing firearms onto, personal firearms onto naval bases, and what your opinion is on potentially allowing Sailors or Marines to either [inaudible].

**Admiral Richardson:** Now why do you want to do that?

**Question:** Well, sir, I don't know if I personally want to do that, but --

**Admiral Richardson:** Okay, why would one want to do that? Why would your friend want to do that?

**Question:** I believe it's something that maybe someone could do either because they feel more secure if someone were to maybe have attacked a naval base.

**Admiral Richardson:** I'll share some stuff with you.

I was on the Washington Navy Yard, right across the street when that, if you recall, that shooter went into the building on the Washington Navy Yard and killed 12 people. He was a rogue shooter. He got inboard, it's a terrible tragedy.

The response to that was remarkable. Anybody have any law enforcement experience in here? Okay, a little bit over here. So because of the nature of this crisis, it was really answered by setting up a command post, and then the folks that really were going to do some good in this were the SWAT teams. This was a serious threat.

I didn't realize it until that day, because I was also the investigating officer for that, that the training for SWAT teams is, you learn every position in the team. You've got your gear in your trunk. And when the call goes down, everybody flows to the scene of the action, the sound of the gunfire, and as teams arrive, all right? If the team is five strong they just form up and go. They don't have to wait for the sniper. They're all trained in all of the skills of the position of the SWAT team so

they just form up and go. Five, next five go. So they can form up and deploy as quickly as possible.

I'll tell you what, as we were watching this literally unfold outside our windows while not standing in those windows so that we didn't get shot, -- [Laughter] -- It wasn't quite as funny when you were there. There was a lot of chaos. A tremendous amount of chaos. Separating -- you don't know who the bad guy is. Right? So you've got these highly-trained SWAT teams moving around trying to separate good guys from bad guys. All they know is that there's somebody shooting.

Now in the middle of all that you pull out your personal firearm. Right? How do I know who you are? Are you a good guy or a bad guy? Hard to tell in all that chaos.

So it's a lot more than just about personal protection. It's about a coordinated, effective approach to neutralize a threat in a very confusing situation, and if you start getting the amateurs in this, we're going to end up hurting a lot more people than we should. So that's how I think about personal firearms on bases. This is serious business and should be done by professionally trained people. I guess that's my answer.

Ken, did I get that about right? Okay.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Patton from the Ohio State University.

This room is full of the future of the Navy officer corps.

**Admiral Richardson:** Is that right? [Laughter].

**Question:** I was wondering how we as junior officers, sir, can drive change up, down and laterally while we serve.

**Admiral Richardson:** That's a great question. One, it's sort of how do you manifest change? It's a really interesting thing to consider, particularly as you become, you're stepping into this leader position. And it's a bit of a change that we can all sort of think about, a change in the leader/follower dynamic. Okay?

The first thing that we all have to understand is that we are all leaders to some degree. Right? You will be appointed by position as leaders, but all of your people are leaders. Maybe even they're only leaders of themselves, but I'll tell you, that

self-discipline matters a lot. And how each of you and each of your people choose to lead yourself is going to make a tremendous difference.

So I would say that you know, start local. Right? Effect that change within yourself first and foremost. And you might find that that's the hardest thing to do. That's what I've found. It's not easy. So start by changing yourself.

Now, I do a lot of All-Hands Calls, a lot of question and answer periods, and a lot of times people will step up to the microphone and they'll say hey, look, I'm a Sailor, and here's my command, and you're the CNO, you've got a lot of authority. Here's my problem. And the implicit dynamic is, I'm one of your people, you're the leader, my leader, can you solve my problem?

The dynamic, starting to say, well, what have you done to solve your own problem within the limits of your authority and capacity? Right? Because I'll tell you, if we get 325,000 Sailors all solving their own problems, man, the wind that will fill those sails will just -- we'll take off. Right? So try and inculcate that in yourselves as you become junior leaders, and you will have these great conversations with your Sailors as you learn how to be a leader. Teach them how to be leaders as well. Even if it's just leaders of themselves. Teach them how to be good leaders of themselves, that solve their own problems to the limits of their ability, limits of their authority, and then comes to you and says, you know what? I've done everything that I can and I'm out of [cats]. The next part of this is above my pay grade, so I'm asking you to help me now. Right? And if we do that we'll change the Navy in dramatically great ways.

So I would start small. Sometimes when we talk about change, everybody wants to sort of make the world a better place, right? And they start by boiling the ocean, and it's hard. But if we think change locally, change the lives of the people in your division for the better, make them a more effective fighting unit. Boy, you'll be incredibly satisfied doing that, and you'll become a better leader. The Navy will be a lot better by virtue of your division running better. And if every division officer does that, holy cow, that really adds up. All right?

Then as you move up in authority and you get a bigger span, you can do that at a bigger level. You're going to be teaching yourself by reading all those books I told you to read. You're



going to be going to schools. Your authority and impact will grow and so will your ability to change things will grow. Okay?

That's how I would approach it if I were you. Don't try to go out there and think, you know, I'm going to boil the ocean, I'm going to write the next killer app, or whatever it is. I'm just going to make myself a better warfighter. I'm going to learn how to lead myself, and I'm going to learn how to lead my team. I'm going to make them better. Okay? And I'm going to put them before myself.

**Question:** Good evening, sir, Midshipman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Rennie Galloway from Notre Dame.

Can you tell us about your family, sir?

**Admiral Richardson:** Well, there goes the 90 minutes.  
[Laughter].

Come on up here. First and foremost in my life is my beautiful bride Dana Richardson. Let's give her a -- [Applause].

I ought to let you talk because you've just been talking about our beautiful family.

**Mrs. Richardson:** I just spent some time in San Diego and at Point Magoo and Port Hueneme talking to different spouse groups about families and about raising families in the Navy, and that is a big question. I know a lot of you are very young and family is off in the horizon for you, but that is a really important thing to think of. And having that strong family, that strong family base is going to keep you strong and keep you doing your mission. But also paying attention to their needs, too.

I will say it's not the easiest life. We've been married for 34 years. And we've moved 21 times. And we have five children. So there were a lot of challenges, but I will say it was a lot of adventure too, and we've learned a lot. I've made some of my vest best friends in the Navy, in the military. One of them is sitting right here, Ms. Reba Ryan. We met in Hawaii. We have lots of things that we share. You become very close.

But more importantly and what would be relevant to you is that my husband and I work together as a team with everything. So as much as he could tell me, because he's a submariner so there's a lot of stuff that he couldn't tell me, but as much as he could

say that concerns us at home and the deployment and how to deal with everything. We shared that. We worked together. And even now, it's more important to work together as a team.

We come together, we're stronger because of that. Pay attention to our kids. We're always talking about either the next move or how they're handling different situations and stuff like that.

It's wonderful that you have communication, like Facetime, Skype, all of that, Facebook, email. We had what, FamilyGram?

**Admiral Richardson:** I'll tell you about that.

**Mrs. Richardson:** So hopefully that answers your question.

**Admiral Richardson:** A vivid demonstration that is a long-abiding Navy tradition, to marry up. So we all marry spouses who are way better than us, and that was pretty great.

So these FamilyGrams. Anybody familiar with those? Yeah. All of us old guys.

Imagine a world of dark cloaked and dark news before email. [Laughter]. You would go out on a deployment for -- we weren't even keeping track back then, right? I mean it was just kind of you go and you fight the Soviets and you come back when the Cold War's over. [Laughter]. So we'd go out for a heck of a long time and you would get about a half a dozen 40-word telegrams. Right? And so Dana would get these messages and they were literally 40 dashes, and they were numbered underneath in the best Navy way -- 1, 2, 3, all the way to 40. You know, two words were Hello, dear. Then Love Dana. So it got down to 36, right? Now we're down to 36 words. Then you have to find something in there that the sensors won't take out. For us submariners, it was like we were just underwater for the longest dang time. We weren't going to pull off-station, so we didn't want any news that might trouble the team. It's not serious enough to pull the boat off so it's probably just not going to help anybody to let them know that, or the sensors would take it out, right? That's too crazy, don't let them say that.

Then they'd transmit the 14 or so remaining words out. And that was how we kept communication in the olden days. It's gotten a lot better.

I also like to track it by how we used to do the Super Bowl at sea. At first, early, kind of FamilyGram technology, the Super

Bowl would happen, everybody would know it happened, everybody would do their thing and you would just get a one-line message, you know. Green Bay 23, whatever. Just get the score. That was it. Everybody would pay the money or get the money -- that was that. [Laughter].

Then technology advanced. The Madden NFL games came out, right? So we couldn't get anything real, in real time from the game, but we would put the two teams on auto-play, right? And we would get the game going. And whoever the two Super Bowl teams were, we'd tee those teams up and let them run automatically. Nobody would be coaching. And boy, I'll tell you, it was just like a real game. The whole mess was going nuts, and cursing, swearing, I can't believe that happened. [Laughter]. It actually -- [Laughter]. So that was sort of the middle phase.

Now the technology's so good, you can watch it in real time. You just put an antenna up and you can pull the game down and watch it in real time. That's kind of one way to think about technology advancement and staying in touch.

But I'll tell you, Dana and I met in high school. We kind of loosely dated all my midshipman experience, and she graduated from Seattle Pacific, as I think I shared with some folks from the University of Washington, and it's just as she said.

I'll tell you another vignette about families because it's extremely important for us to think about this.

We were in command of USS Honolulu, a submarine at Pearl Harbor. We had been in command I would say six months or so, and we had a party of the wardroom over, and we had a number of junior officers that had reported aboard, just brand spanking new, and they were newly married too. So they were coming in. And I think it would be fair to say that everybody came in with just a little bit of an attitude, right? Particularly the ladies were oh, you know, you've been following your husband around for 17 years, and look at all this, and well I am not going to be anybody like that. Okay? I'm not going to do that.

So, Dana said okay, to each his own. Everybody's got a different way of making it happen. A couple of milestones later. First of all, we had a great time in command, and I give Dana all the credit for that. We got back from one deployment one time, we'd been gone about 6.5 months, most of that underwater, and we pulled into Hawaii and it's not uncommon that if you pull into Hawaii, you know, they really do a great job

welcoming you back, and since you're in Hawaii they'll have a halau, a group of hula dancers there. Anybody from Hawaii? Okay. So these halaus are a bunch of young dancers, and there's usually an older woman who's called the wahine, the tutu wahine that runs the dancers, right?

I was the last one off the ship, and this tutu wahine comes up and she says, Hey Captain. I said, yeah? I looking around, I think there's going to be a big earthquake on the island tonight. I'm not sure what to say about that. [Laughter]. I guess I would respectfully agree with you, right? And so sure enough, there's a great picture that we have. It's on our couch nine months later. And everybody in our wardroom had a baby. Almost everybody. You know. And the husbands, the wives, the girlfriends, there was just this line-up of babies on our couch. That was kind of a nice poignant family moment for us. [Laughter].

Then you fast forward, and so now I'm at Naval Reactors. I'm a four star, and for those of you who will go through the command pipeline, everybody comes through Naval Reactors to kind of get the concentrated training on your propulsion plant. Well, I was, as Director of Naval Reactors, one of the command courses that came through had four of my junior officers in one course. They had gone through the whole thing. And guess what? All of those young ladies who were not going to do any of this business, were right there with all their children and they had made it work. It can work. You can have a wonderful family experience. You're going to move all over the world, you're going to see things that other families don't see, your kids are going to be great because you're going to make them great, and they're going to do wonderful.

It was just sort of a nice poignant moment that probably 15 years later, everybody's still there, still in the Navy, going to command with their family intact and doing terrific. So families, a big part of our business. It can be done.

**Question:** Good evening, Admiral. [Inaudible] University.

As [inaudible] a little bit what you were saying about the swing towards the end of your speech. I was just wondering if you could comment on the experience from your career, when you experienced the swing, and especially how this dynamic changed more as your career progressed from when you were a junior officer.

**Admiral Richardson:** Okay, so this idea of swing, about the team really achieving its own level of performance, almost unconsciously, right? Where the individual gets lost in the performance of the team.

I'll just go back to Honolulu. I thought, we did some great things in that boat. And we're still all up on Facebook together, and we all come together as families still.

I'll tell you one thing, one story that maybe captures that. First of all, I should let you guys know. You talk a lot about water under the keel, Tom. Have you ever calculated how much time you spent at sea?

**Admiral Rowden:** No, sir. [Inaudible].

**Admiral Richardson:** That's what I'm thinking. 14 years at sea, so that's a lot of water under the keel?

Steve, any thoughts?

**Voice:** Just over 12, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** Yeah, 12 years at sea.

Chris?

**Admiral Grady:** About 14.

**Admiral Richardson:** Yeah, we're all about the same ball park. I've spent 11 years actually submerged underwater. So a lot of opportunity to achieve swing. And we had five kids. [Laughter].

Anyway, we did this one evolution in the submarine force, it's called Prospective Commanding Officer Operations. And you know what that's about, right? You kind of understand that this is what we do when we train all of our CO's. Right? What we do is we split them up into groups of about four or five and we put that group down on a submarine and we take that submarine -- Well, they have to prepare their war plans, and then we take that group to sea on about three different submarines and we fight a giant war, about three weeks. And boy, did we pull in all sorts of assets to do that. Chris, you were involved in that when you were involved in SURFLANT, Tom, you'd do a ton of that. And everybody gets really great training out of that. We shoot something like 80 exercise torpedoes a year as we go

through these things. And you exercise every mission at the very high end. You're doing coastal reconnaissance, you know, all those missions that the submarine does. Really tough navigation. Really tough mission planning. Very very advanced submarining. Wartime submarining.

So we had just done that, and the submarine crew has to go through that, and the PCO's kind of rotate through and exercise command. Boy the team just had really done terrific. They had achieved nirvana. In fact we were going up, we were SSN 718, kind of a mature SSN. And we were going up against a much newer, right off the assembly line attack submarine which was supposed to be a lot quieter, a lot more capable, et cetera, and we just cleaned their clock. I mean we crushed them.

So we get back from this, and just because of the way we were in our, kind of our pre-deployment cycle, the Commodore said hey, great job, you knocked it all out of the park. But you've got to do this basic submarining assessment because of where you are.

I said well Commodore, couldn't I take credit for time served here? We just sort of did the NFL level training. Why do I need to now go back and do this JV thing? The Commodore said yeah, you make really good sense. Just do the damn thing, okay? [Laughter].

So I was toward the end of my command tour and so I said you know, it would be a great test of the team if I just don't participate. So I didn't. And I told the Commodore, the XO's got the command duty officer for this entire underway, and he'll do this thing himself and I'll read books in my stateroom. I've got a long reading list I've been meaning to get through.

So the Commodore was like well, you can do whatever you want, Captain, but if you don't do well on this exam, right, you own that.

So the XO and I talked and then I let him have it. He did just terrific. And at that point I knew we had really achieved something magical. What I did is, instead of go out and get involved. Of course I was the Captain still so you just can't walk away from that. So I was listening. I had all the mikes and sensors and I was following things, and I did cheat and talk to the XO every now and then about a couple hundred times a day. [Laughter]. But just to hear that team operate, just because, to your point about leadership. They knew exactly what they

needed to do as leaders. Maybe just leaders of themselves. Leaders of their watch station. There was no holding anybody, right? Everybody was pushing the effort. That was a really nice, satisfying moment. And they went out and we just knocked that thing out of the park. Without the Captain playing a role. So that was kind of a neat thing.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 1<sup>st</sup> Class [Inaudible].

You spoke earlier about finding a path to success. [Inaudible] your definition [inaudible]. As midshipmen we spend a lot of time thinking about where we want our career to take us and where we want to end up long term. I was wondering, as a midshipman did you, where did you plan on ending up and how have your goals and priorities changed since then? Did you ever expect to end up where you are?

**Admiral Richardson:** Well, the answer to that last part is no. And in fact, I've got to tell you, there are people that are a lot better at that than me in terms of career planning and all that stuff. I really just kind of went where they told me and led my teams, did the very best job I could. I trusted the Navy to take care of me.

I think the secret ingredients are actually pretty simple. Be a good person. Do good things. Put your team before yourself. And never stop learning. Never stop improving. If you do that, the Navy's going to take really good care of you and send you to great jobs.

There were a number of times I our, 34, 35 years now where it was like okay, at the end of this tour we're going to try something different. And every single time the Navy had the best offer on the table by a mile. So here we are. I didn't look, I just did what I was told to the best of my ability.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Alexander, Purdue University.

Sir, Admiral Rowden talked about the defining moment in his speech earlier today. What was the defining moment in your career?

**Admiral Richardson:** What were yours, Tom? I don't want to --

**Admiral Rowden:** Anything you put into your experience, you put into [inaudible], makes you who you are. I talked about the first time that Admiral [inaudible]. Those types of things.

**Admiral Richardson:** Those are great. We all have a library of these things, and they're so special. And I think a lot of them stem from our very first tour at sea. Right? Your first commanding officer is going to have an amazing impact on you. And I am still in touch with my first CO like he's my second dad. Captain Pete Graff and his wife Carol. We get together all the time. We send each other stuff all the time. He's been to every one of my changes of command. And when he did his very last underway, right, I was the officer of the deck for that. He came up as the Captain of the ship, his last underway in command, the last time he was going to go to sea. And he took the com, but he said, Richardson, you stand right behind me and watch me because it's been a little while since I steered a ship.

But there were these magical moments that, these defining moments, as Admiral Rowden said so well, that just will live with you forever. Right? It's the same type of thing.

I was the junior officer of the deck underway, and we were in a really nasty place. I was not qualified officer of the deck so I was standing, you know, my part of the team. The Captain called me up, just like with Admiral Rowden. He said hey, take, relieve his officer of the deck. I said, well, sir. I haven't finished my qualification. I know I'm really close. He's like, what did I just tell you? And you relieve the officer of the deck, right? And you take it.

Then the next thing he said was okay, now bring me a gas mask. Have somebody send me a gas mask. He was always needling me.

But those are those magic moments that I hope all of you have with your first sea tour, because they will set you on a trajectory that will launch you for your entire career.

But I'll tell you a very poignant moment. This was in San Diego. I was the executive officer on a submarine, and we were still kind of, you know, we had sort of a rebellious streak to us. My wife Dana's from Oregon which -- anybody else from Oregon? Good. There's sort of a built-in stick it to the man attitude out there in Oregon. All Oregoners are, they have this sort of rebellious streak and Dana's no exception. And so we were still kind of figuring out our career. I mean I'd been in



the Navy probably 11 years. More than that. That was '93, so 13 years. About 13 years let's say. And we'd been moved a number of times. And Dana finally said look, there's this big pile of crap on this shelf that you've been hauling around from duty station to duty station. I want you to go through that and keep what you need to keep and throw away what you don't.

So I'm going through this thing and you know, it's a lot of professional stuff, most of which was trash. But you're kind of going through, trash, trash, trash, and you get this certificate which is your Order of the Golden Dragon. These big goofy certificates that celebrate you crossing the International Date Line. Right, Chris? So I'm like I'm going to keep that. So I put that over there. So you go through, blah, blah, blah. Whoa, Order of the Blue Nose, right? So you crossed the Arctic Circle. I'm going to keep that too. Duh, duh, duh. The Order of the Ditch. Oh, I've gone through that Canal. Oh, here's my [Shell Pass] certificate, right? So I crossed the Equator.

So as I went through this pile I looked over there and it was like holy cow. I think I'm a Sailor. I think I'm a dang Sailor. So you know what? I'm going to give this Sailor stuff a run, and committed forever. Never looked back from that point. So that was kind of a poignant moment that always sticks with me, it kind of hit me that the accumulation of my experiences, without even having thought about it, kind of to your point, just doing the job I was given. I'd been in every part of the world's oceans, all over the place. I was a Sailor, and I still am.

That's kind of a mike drop thing there.

**Question:** [Inaudible] from the Academy.

Sir, I was wondering if you think the challenges pertaining to the retention of top-performing Millennials are different from previous generations who served in the Navy? And if so, what kind of initiatives you're considering implementing for [inaudible]?

**Admiral Richardson:** Have you met Lieutenant Barren? Has anybody had a chance to meet her? Rock star. I've had a chance to know Kayla for a while. She's a leading edge female submariner. So those are dolphins that she's wearing. Fully qualified. In the first cadre to do that. So not only supremely technically qualified, but also a bit of a groundbreaker in that regard to really carve out new ground for

everybody else. And that program is doing terrific, largely for the types of efforts that Kayla and her peers made at the start of that. Is in the very very final vetting process to become an astronaut, so really kind of crushing it out of the park in every way. So how about a round of applause for -- [Applause].

I think that might be the most skillful way I've ever dodged a question. [Laughter].

No, I think the Millennials, which I think is you guys. Who fancies themselves a millennial. Who says, I don't know what this Millennial thing is about, I'm just myself. I'm just who I am. Okay. There's some of that.

So if you sort of advocate and believe in these generational types of structures, right, the ways of describing generations, I think you noticed, Kayla, the Millennial generation, if you map attributes and traits and stuff, most closely maps to the Greatest Generation, which is the generation that won World War II. Man, that's not a bad thing. If you want to have a generation, that's not a bad one to be like. Those folks who just sort of answered the nation's call, ran to the sound of gunfire, and you know, saved the world. Did a bunch of that saving the world overseas in other people's countries, other people's lands, and defeated enemies in those lands, and then turned around and built those enemies back up to be contributors in the world order. In fact major contributors, right? Germany, Japan, real world leaders. That's not a bad generation to be like if you fancy generational types of things.

So I think that that's a great generation to be. I'm excited.

The other thing that often is cited as a characteristic of Millennials is that you guys want to know why you do stuff all the time. I'll tell you, that's just annoying to us guys -- [Laughter]. We just want you to do what you're told, all right?

Particularly at Naval Reactors, which is an organization with a very important culture. It's like hey, what's all this -- this is about why. You look back and like, what did we do? We just did stuff because we were told? We never understood why. I said it makes really good sense to understand why. Oh by the way, you'll do your job a thousand times better if you know why you're doing it, rather than just being told what to do. So let's get on board with this whole why thing and explain why we're doing stuff. So that's been a part of the new -- It make sense to me. I don't know if it's a new approach or whatever.

Then I think consistent with this adherence to values, right? We have these core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. And the attributes in the design are really sort of litmus tests to make sure that our behaviors align with those values. Our behaviors as an organization align with our values as a profession. Okay?

We can't compete in salary space. We talk about competition. We're competing for talent as well. And you are all evidence that we're winning that competition. Right? We're getting you, some of the most talented people in the world. And you could write your own checks. You could have gone anywhere and you chose to come here, and you're going to raise your right hand, you're going to take an oath to protect and defend the constitution, support and defend the constitution against all enemies. And you're doing this at the end of 15 years of continuous conflict, combat. And I have a tremendous amount of respect for that. And I think, my hypothesis is that you do that because there's a nobility and there's a value proposition in what we do. There's a nobility to it, and there's a meaningfulness to it that you can't get anywhere else. Okay?

So that's what attracts you. That's what gets you in. And I'm very mindful that we have to walk that talk in everything that we do now that you're in. And you need to hold us honest to that.

So where you see our behaviors diverging from our values, you need to sing out and let us know and we'll correct and get back on track. And these four attributes of Initiative and Accountability, of Toughness. They are litmus tests to make sure our behaviors stay lined up with our values. That will keep our best warfighters in. Okay? That's kind of my approach to that.

**Question:** [Inaudible].

So [inaudible] officers in our Navy, we're all bound to [inaudible]. I was wondering if you could talk to a time when you've experienced failure and how you moved forward with that.

**Admiral Richardson:** Sorry, I've never failed. [Laughter].

Hey, listen, I'll tell you. We're all going to experience that, and I did too. Admiral Rowden did, Admiral Grady did, Admiral Evans did. We all goofed up. Right? And in our business, our

nuclear business, we have all sorts of ways of naming it but you know you've goofed up when you're writing an incident report. That's been kind of a major goof-up, that you've got to tell now Admiral Caldwell what happened, how you were an idiot, and how you're never going to do that again.

As I said, and I've had plenty of those, right? And I've had an incredible number of near misses where it's, wait a second, what just happened? And you reconstruct that and it's like holy cow, we were just absolutely lucky that we didn't run aground, have a collision, you know, overheat something. Just total luck.

So let's rewind that as if we had really run aground. We call it near miss. Let's learn all the lessons. Because those are free lessons. You goofed up as bad as you could have, you could have run aground, it was just luck that you didn't. So let's dive in and learn all of that. Right?

So the system is built to accommodate that. As I said. As you start down that lane of competence you're going to make these sorts of mistakes.

I'll tell you about errors, though. You don't want to be making ensign mistakes when you're a lieutenant. Okay? You don't want to be making midshipman mistakes when you're an ensign. You certainly don't want to be making captain mistakes when you're a three star. Okay? So you really do have to learn. And the bar does go up over time. And the Leader Framework talks about that. The standards get higher and higher. That's the thing to watch out for. If you're making rookie mistakes when you're in the Super Bowl, well then you lose and we can't tolerate that.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. I'm Midshipman 4<sup>th</sup> class Ship from the University --

**Admiral Richardson:** Ship, what did I tell you during the photo op? Ship asked me like a barrage of questions just taking a picture, so -- [Laughter]. It better be good ones.

**Question:** This is a burning question, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** A burning question? Okay.

**Question:** Throughout this whole conference we've been talking humility has been one of the keys in becoming a great leader. I wondered if you have huge pride, besides pride in the uniform,

pride into your work and how that has affected your work in both good and bad ways.

**Admiral Richardson:** Great question. This whole idea of humility and pride is a great one to read about, and there's a lot of terrific literature on humility and pride, and what a great place to talk about humility and pride here on the campus of Notre Dame.

As I understand it, pride, my sense, pride is the door that leads to an awful lot of problems. And you've really got to watch that. Pride is, it blinds you. We talked about blind spots earlier, pride just magnifies those blind spots and makes you almost blind completely to your problems.

So I would, rather than thinking about being proud, I would think very deeply about how to remain introspective and keep yourself honest and on course. That's pride. And pride leads to all sorts of other things, right?

Maybe the flip side, and Father you can correct me here if I'm getting the theology wrong or the metaphysics wrong here. The flip side of pride might be humility. Humility as I like to think about it is really just sort of the abject adherence to the truth. So it's not that, the truth is that you're all very capable people. So you can't shy away from that. That's false humility. So that's why we have such high expectations for you because we recognize that truth too. We're going to load you right up. And you've all seen that, false humility, right? It's kind of insincere.

But it's also true that where we're flawed, we're going to make these mistakes that we've been talking about some tonight, and we're going to need a support network. We're not going to be able to pull this off on our own, no matter how talented we are. That is also a recognition of the truth.

So this sort of very clear adherence to the truth is I think the way to be appropriately humble, and then to avoid certainly any false pride that will blind us to just getting better.

The other thing that pride, being overly proud bakes in is that you stop getting better. You think you're all that and a bag of chips and so you stop working. And we never want to stop that. Our competitors are working day and night to beat us.

Part of this truth is that every now and then you're going to do something really noteworthy, by any measure. And it's good that you stop and recognize that. As I said in that opening goal, you're grateful for that victory, but you're humble about that victory. You know you didn't do it yourself, and you're probably, if it's a big victory, you're probably pretty tired and you're just grateful to have gotten through it.

So keeping that in balance, you've got to force yourself to be introspective. It's counter to a lot of our human nature, but you've got to work at it really hard.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 4<sup>th</sup> Class Lee, University of Notre Dame.

I know a lot of media attention has been paid lately to former military officers being appointed high-ranking civilian positions in the government. I was wondering, sir, what your thoughts were on how this might impact foreign policy. Especially the Navy's role [inaudible].

**Admiral Richardson:** That's a great question. If I could encourage you to ask that in your next American government class, and we'll concentrate on leadership at the Navy Leadership Weekend, okay? Thanks.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class [Inaudible], [Rice] University.

On the same lines as [inaudible], yesterday when General Neller spoke to us he talked about forgiveness and compassion and he shared stories with us about when he earlier on his career, when he accidentally burned down the firing range at Okinawa, and then as a battalion commander instead of ending his career right there, just to forgive him. And then there's also the story of Admiral Nimitz when he was an ensign, he ran his ship aground, and he was also forgiven.

So how do you know where to draw the line for forgiveness and where not to draw the line?

**Admiral Richardson:** I think that both General Neller's boss and Admiral Nimitz's boss saw that both of those officers had amazing potential to do something great for the nation. Even at that more junior rank. So it really, that's the thing in my mind all the time. I can go through a number of, and that's kind of, if it was Lieutenant Nimitz or Commander Nimitz, that was a

complicated situation. It was kind of a commander level mistake, and sometimes that happens.

But if you become, a zero-defect approach where I just fire everybody for the first mistake, that's a zero-leadership environment. There's no leadership going on there. I can write a very simple computer program to get me through that scenario.

It comes back, for me, to the concept of ownership and accountability. And General Neller and Admiral Nimitz's bosses, and Admiral Rowden and Admiral Grady, they're accountable for executing really important missions. Admiral Grady's running the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet and Naval Forces Europe and Africa, right? And Admiral Rowden's responsible for keeping our surface force relevant and capable and winning. Admiral Evans educates all of you. Right? Those are huge missions. And if they fired everybody at their first mistake, they're not going to achieve those missions.

So it's about potential, accountability, ownership, and what's the right thing to do. There's no formula for any single situation, but you've got to take each one on the merits. And work your way through it.

I wish I could give you a formula. Actually, I don't, because then I would deny you the joy of leadership and working your way through that. Your people are going to be making mistakes before you know it. You're going to be making those decisions about the future of people's careers -- what year are you?

**Question:** I'm a junior, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** So you've got two years, you're going to be making those decisions. So it's good that you're thinking about it now.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 4<sup>th</sup> Class Slattery, University of Notre Dame.

Sir, I was wondering why you mentioned the meditations of Marcus Aurelius. You mentioned that [inaudible]. And I also know that Secretary of Defense Mattis has [inaudible]. I was wondering if [inaudible] the military and how we can [inaudible].

**Admiral Richardson:** Okay. Have you read any of the Stoics?

**Question:** No, sir.

**Admiral Richardson:** Another one of my favorite, he's not with the classics, but is Admiral Stockdale. He's the guy who first turned me onto the Stoics. I'll tell you, the Stoics are terrific for leaders because one of the fundamental precepts of Stoicism is that there's an awful lot of stuff that can get you excited out there in the world but there's only so much over which you can do anything about. Right? So it's just a lot of unfocused anxiety, to use the term of one of our favorite colleagues, to get all excited and worry and worked up about something over which you can't do anything about. Right?

So the idea of Stoicism to, okay, I'm in this situation, here's my span of control of that situation. I'm going to do the very best within that span of control and not get too worked up about worrying needlessly about something that's done or over or I have no control over. And so that's a very clarifying approach right off the bat. Saves us all from a lot of unneeded worry, a lot of wasted energy, and keeps us focused on the objective and optimizing our situation. That's why I like them.

So you read Enchiridion, it's a terrific book. It's kind of a distilled list of Epictetus' greatest hits, if you will, and it's real quick reading, and it's the same with Aurelius. They're fast and they're very powerful. And this is the philosophy that allowed Admiral Stockdale as the senior officer in the Hanoi Hilton, to lead that team. Even though they were working with, their captors were working ceaselessly to prevent them from communicating, prevent any leader from emerging, and it would have been easy for any one of those officers, particularly Admiral Stockdale, to say hey look, I'm screwed here. It's over. But he didn't. Right? He took a real hard assessment at what he could control and he understood his responsibility as the leader there, and he took charge and made it happen. And that's another group that still stays in great contact. They're dwindling, but they still get together and treasure his leadership.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. [Inaudible] University of Wisconsin.

You talked about constantly learning and just trying to soak up information as we go. I'm wondering if you can talk about when that clicked for you, at what stage in your life, and what was your motivation to get into a routine with that.



**Admiral Richardson:** I don't know. How many of you sort of fancy yourselves as kind of naturally curious? Good. I would too. So it was one of those things. I guess I've got to thank my parents for that. They were always sort of challenging us and inviting us to -- actually, they were kicking us out of the house is what they were doing. Hey, get out of here, and I don't want to see you until I call you back for dinner. And this was usually at sunrise. [Laughter]. You just had to kind of go out there and survive, and there's an awful lot of creativity that emerges from trying to survive. But we lived in Italy for a while when we were growing up. This was before a lot of different options on TV and that sort of thing. In fact I don't think we had TV in the house. We read a ton. That's the only way we could do stuff. And so read all the classics, kind of in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Appropriate classics. And just sort of never stopped from there.

**Question:** Good evening, sir. Midshipman 4<sup>th</sup> Class Allory, University of Notre Dame.

A big factor we talked about this week from all the speakers is how to get through challenges and [inaudible] and still come through as strong leaders. So I was wondering, you spoke of what your [inaudible] moment, your defining moments were. Can you speak of like what one of the hardest challenges was for you during your years of service?

**Admiral Richardson:** I think without getting super specific, the times where I felt the worst, that I'd go to Admiral Rowden and Admiral Grady as well is when through some oversight or lack of effort or mistake of my own, I really let my team down. And so here's this team that just wants to just to crush it and by virtue of some kind of oversight, you make a mistake and that mistake results in you letting your team down. Whether that's an individual on your team or whether that's the entire team itself. And you can all look, and they know, they're pretty smart. You know, we were going to win that game until you did that. And boy, those are crushing times. Those are when you really have to kind of retreat a little bit, think hard about what just happened. Kind of retain your mojo, if you will. That's when toughness really gets tested. So you've got to kind of return, right?

We talked about Admiral Nimitz, right? Here's Admiral Nimitz as a commander, running his ship aground. Well, he had to get back, he didn't have the option of leaving the field, of leaving the fleet. He had to get back in the fight. And so he did.

Right? And he went on and did what only Admiral Nimitz could do at that time.

You'll run into those situations. In your every molecule will be feeling sorry about yourself, and you will have let your team down, and they'll know it, but they're ready to forgive you as long as you go back in and you're better the next time. Okay?

That was the last question.

Just the leadership potential and what you're going to do for our Navy, I've got to tell you, it's humbling to stand in front of you. It's been a pleasure having a conversation with you. I hope it was useful in some way as you go forward. And I look forward to seeing every one of you in the fleet, leading your teams and doing great things.

Thanks very much.

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